

LATEST NEWS OF THE WORLD BY TELEGRAPH AND CABLE. { CONTINUED ON PAGES 6, 11.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Shall the Precedents Be Followed, or Shall the People Be Ignored?

The Question of Amending the Constitution of the State is the Burning Issue Before the People, Who Demand That the Work of the Convention be Submitted to Them for Ratification or Rejection—The Uniform and Unbroken Custom for Seventy Years.

The question of amending the present Constitution of Virginia is the burning issue now before the people of the State. The general consensus of opinion is in favor of the amendment of that monster imposition upon the people, but the mode of accomplishing this end has evolved wide divergence of opinion. We favor the plan of submitting the new constitution to a vote of the PEOPLE for ratification or rejection, and we feel fortified by two considerations of overwhelming force—first, an abiding faith in the intelligence and capacity of the people to determine the matter for themselves—indeed, their RIGHT to be final arbiters in the premises; and, secondly, the uniform custom of Virginia, for the last seventy years, of submitting new constitutions to a vote of the PEOPLE for FINAL ACTION. A glance at the records relating to these constitutional amendments will be useful in enlightening our minds as to the custom which has prevailed in Virginia upon the subject for the past seventy years, and we think we can do no better than to follow in this line of safe precedents.

The Virginia Convention of 1829-'30, in the preamble to the Constitution prepared by it, recited its powers upon the mode of proceeding to adopt a new constitution as follows:

"And, whereas, the General Assembly of Virginia, by an act passed on the 20th day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-nine, entitled 'An act to organize a convention, did authorize and provide for the election, by the people, of delegates and representatives to meet and assemble in general convention, at the Capitol in the city of Richmond, on the first Monday in October, in the year last aforesaid, to consider, discuss, and propose a new constitution, or alterations and amendments of the existing Constitution of this Commonwealth, TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE PEOPLE, and to be by THEM ratified or rejected.'

"We, therefore, the delegates and representatives of the good people of Virginia, elected and in convention assembled, in pursuance of the said act of Assembly, do submit and propose to the PEOPLE the following amended constitution, and form of government for this Commonwealth; that is to say: [Then follows the constitution recommended. See pages 35 to 45 of the Code of Virginia of 1819.]

On the same day that the enrolled constitution was signed by the president and secretary of the convention, to-wit: on the 15th of January, 1830, the convention ordered as follows:

"ORDERED, That the president of the convention do certify a true copy of the amended constitution to the General Assembly now in session; and that the General Assembly be and they are hereby requested to make any additional provisions by law, which may be necessary and proper for submitting the same to the VOTERS thereby qualified to vote at the next April elections, and for organizing the government under the amended constitution, in case it shall be approved and ratified by such VOTERS." Page 46, Code of 1819.

And at the foot of that order, and on the same page, is the following statement:

"On the 12th February, 1830, an act of Assembly was passed, under which the amended constitution was submitted to the VOTERS qualified thereby to vote for members of the General Assembly, for THEIR RATIFICATION or REJECTION. Upon examination of the polls, it appearing to the executive that a majority of the votes given was for ratifying the amended constitution, that fact was made known TO THE PEOPLE by a proclamation bearing date the 1st day of July, 1830; in the proclamation the number of votes was stated to be 26,055 for the ratification, and 15,563 against it."

That convention was a very able and patriotic body, and so far as we know there was perfect unanimity in the policy of submitting the constitution to the PEOPLE for ratification or rejection.

The next Constitutional Convention in Virginia was held in 1850 to amend the constitution of 1830. It pursued the same course in regard to submitting the new constitution to a vote of the PEOPLE that had been adopted by the convention of 1830. The closing paragraph of the preamble to the new constitution was as follows:

"We, therefore, the delegates of the good people of Virginia, elected and in convention assembled, in pursuance of said acts, do propose to the PEOPLE the following constitution and form of government for this Commonwealth." Code of 1850, page 38.

This amended constitution was ratified by the PEOPLE on the fourth Thursday in October, 1851. Code of 1860, page 25.

That was also a very able and patriotic body.

We only now and here refer to the Alexandria Convention of 1864 to show that we have traced these proceedings in their order. That body is unworthy of further notice—a mere abortion, so far as the people of the State were concerned.

The next State Convention in order was the Underwood Convention that adopted the constitution under which

we are now living, and have been since 1869. That convention was not called into existence by the people of Virginia, but was created by acts of Congress. In its preamble to the constitution, the convention "proposed to the PEOPLE" the constitution known as the Underwood Constitution, but the acts of Congress, creating the convention, limited the right to vote to "the people of Virginia qualified to vote under the provisions of said acts." Accordingly, that constitution was submitted to a vote of the people so qualified on the 6th of July, 1869, and it was ratified and became effective on and after that day. So that even the Underwood Constitution preserved the semblance of deference to the PEOPLE and submitted to THEM the adoption or rejection of the instrument.

It thus appears that, for seventy years, the uniform and unbroken custom of submitting new constitutions to a vote of the PEOPLE for ratification or rejection has been observed in Virginia. Why vary or abandon this custom? ARE WE AFRAID TO TRUST THE PEOPLE? Are the people less capable of enlightened judgment and patriotic action now than heretofore? In denying to them the right to pass upon these vital matters, are we not striking a fatal blow at the fundamental basis of a government by the people? What harm can result from our following the precedents set before us for the last seventy years? All considerations of prudence and wisdom would seem to point to the policy of submitting the work of the convention to a vote of the PEOPLE for ratification or rejection. Our best safety rests in that course.

PORTO RICAN LEGISLATION.

OPPOSITION TO TARIFF BILL GAINING STRENGTH.

(By Telegraph to Virginian-Pilot.)

Washington, March 23.—The Republican caucus committee of the Senate to-day authorized Senator Foraker in definite terms to propose the separation of the tariff feature from the Porto Rican governmental bill and to attempt to pass the House tariff bill without amendment. The program is to vote down all amendments if possible to do so, and pass the bill as it comes from the House without any changes whatever.

There was a disposition manifested to placate the free traders by making various amendments to the governmental bill. The tariff advocates have gone so far as to draft amendments to that measure which are intended both to correct administrative defects in the House bill and also to meet many of the objections to the House tariff measure. One of these amendments looks to the enlargement of the free trade list so as to include most of the articles of export in which the constituents of the free trade Senators are interested. There is also a proposition looking to the entire removal of the duty on articles from the United States going into Porto Rico.

One member of the committee stated that it was the purpose of the committee to ask every day that a time be set for taking a vote, thus placing the responsibility for any delay that might occur upon the free traders.

The element in the Republican ranks in the Senate favoring free trade with Porto Rico decided at a conference to-day to oppose any action looking to an early vote and to ask for further time in case the question should come up. About ten Senators were present. They were unanimously of the opinion that delay meant gains for their cause in the public good will and in the Senate. A canvass of the Republican Senators was made with the result, it was stated, that 15 could be found who would oppose hasty action. Of these it was stated that ten were unalterably opposed to a tariff on our commerce with Porto Rico.

FREE SILVER REPUBLICANS.

CHAIRMAN TOWNE CALLS NATIONAL CONVENTION.

(By Telegraph to Virginian-Pilot.)

Duluth, Minn., March 23.—Chairman Charles A. Towne, of the National Committee of the Silver Republican party, has issued a call for a national convention of the party to meet in the Coate's Opera House, at Kansas City, Mo., at 12 o'clock noon Thursday, July 4, 1900, to place in nomination candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States, and for such other business as may properly come up.

A cordial invitation to attend is extended "to all electors in the United States, who in 1896, left the Republican party because of the abandonment by that party of its traditional policy of bimetalism; and also to all present members of that organization which, by its adoption of the gold standard, by its surrender to banks of the government function of issuing money, and by its other numerous acts of recreancy to the principles and traditions of the best days of the Republican party, have been convinced that the party of Lincoln no longer exists, and who are prepared to recognize the duties of patriotism as superior to all party obligations."

COLONEL PLUMER FORCED BACK

The Boers Compel Him to Retire to Old Position.

GENERAL FRENCH FIGHTING

Lord Methuen Skirmishing With the Boers and Although in Sufficient Force He Has Not Advanced These Five Days—General Buller Stationary in Natal—Boers Flocking to the Transvaal Standard—Boer Commandant Is Isolating Colonel Plumer's Force—Lord Roberts' Large Army.

(By Telegraph to Virginian-Pilot.)

London, March 24.—4:15 a. m.—Lord Roberts' main army continue waiting at Bloemfontein. The sentimental interest in the fate of Mafeking has intensified with Colonel Plumer's forced retirement to Crocodile Pools, where he was two months ago.

Relief from the north now dwindles to improbability.

Lord Methuen is skirmishing with the Boers at Warrenton, 167 miles away. Although seemingly in force sufficient to do pretty much as he likes, he has not advanced these five days. It is hoped that his military administration has a pleasant surprise in preparation.

THE STARS AND STRIPES FOR PHILIPPINE SCHOOLS.



The mission of Colonel Allen C. Bakewell to Porto Rico last November distributing flags provided by Lafayette post to the public schools of the island proved so successful that the post promptly decided to supply flags for the Philippines. The Porto Ricans received the flags with solemn appreciation of the action of the post in sending them. Having provided 250 flags for the Philippine schools, the committee on flag presentation applied to the secretary of war for permission to distribute them in the territory under United States control. In granting permission Secretary Root stated that it would please the government if the number of flags should be increased to 400. This was done, and the flags were forwarded in December to army headquarters at Manila. With the sanction of the secretary of war the flags were assigned to General Otis, accompanied by a request on the part of the post, which Secretary Root endorsed favorably, that Colonel John W. French, Twenty-third Infantry, serving in the Philippines, act as special commissioner of the post in distributing the flags. Colonel French, whose portrait is here shown, is a comrade of Lafayette post, which he joined in 1886. He has served in the regular army continuously since 1861, when he was promoted from the ranks of the Seventh New York militia to a lieutenancy in the Eighth regulars.

for the Britishers by raising the siege with a strong column of cavalry and artillery detouring to Mafeking while commandant Snyman is drawn off to engage Colonel Plumer.

General French's cavalry and mounted infantry, according to a rumor, are fighting somewhere east of Bloemfontein. This suggests more Boer bad news, as Commandant Olivier's command with two thousand wagons, is reported on the Basutoland frontier, toiling northward toward Kroonstadt, via Ladybrand. This enormous wagon train is supposed to be moving twenty-five miles a day.

General French's cavalry posts stretch from Bloemfontein eastward to the mountains.

General Buller has not yet moved in Natal.

The Eighth Division will go direct to Bloemfontein.

A LARGE ARMY.

Lord Roberts' effective disposable at the front ten days hence will be, it is estimated, 70,000 men, with the easy possibility of moving eastward, forcing the Boers to evacuate the Tugela river ranges, and joining hands with General Buller before continuing the promenade to Pretoria.

ISOLATING PLUMER.

London, March 24.—A dispatch to the Daily News from Lourenco Marques, dated Friday, says:

"It is reported here from Pretoria that Commandant Eloff is isolating Colonel Plumer's forces near Gaberones."

COL. PLUMER FORCED BACK.

London, March 23.—Col. Plumer apparently retired to Crocodile Pools, and

WALTER COTTON THE MURDERER

In Jail at Emporia and Protected by the Military.

HE MAKES A CONFESSION

The Negro Relates How He Killed Justice Saunders and Constable Welton Thursday Morning—Infuriated Citizens of Greenwich County Thirst for His Blood—If Not Lynched He Will be Brought to Portsmouth, Re-sentenced to be Hanged and Die for the Murder of Wyatt.

(Special to The Virginian-Pilot.)

Suffolk, Va., March 23.—Under sentence of death in Portsmouth and the known slayer of at least four men, Walter Cotton, a noted negro desperado, was captured this morning one and a half miles from Stony Creek, Va. With his alleged associates in crime, Cotton to-night lies in jail at Emporia, Va., under the protection of State militia, which arrived this afternoon from Richmond to prevent a threatened lynching. Hurricane Branch said this afternoon that the people of Emporia were cowards if they did not lynch Cotton to-night. He thought the people of Portsmouth would not see him. But that was before State

THEY SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Leading Party Men Deny That They Oppose a Revision of the Constitution.

They Agree With the Virginian-Pilot That Delegates Should Be Instructed to Make Amendments to the Constitution by a Convention, a Party Measure; and That the Result Should be Submitted to Popular Vote—They Desire the People to be the Final Arbiters.

Certain journals, not heretofore in sympathy with the Democratic party and its platform adopted at Chicago, having persistently endeavored to place the leading party men and politicians of this city and the State in the position of opposing a convention for the revision of the State Constitution, therefore, the Virginian-Pilot, as a Democratic paper, felt called upon, in justice to the well-known Democrats affected and in the interest of the party, to give them an opportunity of expressing their sentiments and views on the matter.

Every office-holder and candidate for office will be given an opportunity to express themselves on this subject. Several were seen yesterday with the following result:

HON. C. BROOKS JOHNSTON.

Mayor C. Brooks Johnston was seen at his office. He said: "I am most emphatically in favor of the Constitutional Convention, and believe that the delegates to the State Democratic Convention, to be held here May 2d, should be instructed to make it a party measure, but not without also requiring the convention to arrange for placing its work before the people for their ratification or rejection. The people should say whether they like the changes or not. I have yet to hear of the first city official against the convention and all want it submitted to the people."

CAPT. W. W. DEY.

Capt. W. W. Dey was next seen. He, too, favored a convention and favored a submission to the people of the new constitution. Capt. Dey said: "I am thoroughly in favor of the Constitutional Convention and the submission of its recommendations to the people for them to accept or reject, as the majority of the voters deem best for the interests of all. It is a matter of the people, and theirs is the right to decide."

CITY TREASURER HERMAN.

Mr. Herman was found at his office,

but said his mind was full of the cares of his candidacy, and he had not considered the question, hence he begged to be excused from expressing any opinion on the matter of a Constitutional Convention or submission of its work to the people.

CHIEF OF POLICE KIZER.

Chief Kizer, upon being interviewed, said he strongly favored the Constitutional Convention, the making of its action a strict party measure and the submission of its work to the people. He believed the correct thing to do is to submit every matter of great importance to the direct vote of the people.

MR. JAMES F. DUNCAN.

Mr. James F. Duncan was met on the street and briefly interviewed. He stated that he had heard a great deal about Constitutional Convention and revision of the State Constitution, but he confessed he did not know wherein it was defective or in need of revision. On the matter of submission of the action of the Constitutional Convention to the people he first thought the matter might properly be left to the Legislature, but finally concluded that the recommendations of the convention should be ratified or rejected by a direct vote of the people.

CLERK OF COURTS ROYSTER.

Clerk of Courts Royster, when interviewed, stated that he had been very busy of late and could not express himself as to the necessity or desirability of revision of the State Constitution or the holding of a Constitutional Convention. He said that if a Constitutional Convention is held he thought the result of its deliberations should be submitted to the people for their approval or disapproval.

MR. JAMES BARKLEY.

Mr. James Barkley, candidate for City Sergeant, was found at his place of business. He said he is firmly in favor of a Constitutional Convention; wants it made a party measure, and wants all proposed changes submitted to a direct vote of the people; then let the people approve or reject as the majority may determine.

KENTUCKY SUSPECTS.

ON TRIAL FOR ABETTING ASSASSINATION OF GOEBEL.

(By Telegraph to Virginian-Pilot.)

Frankfort, Ky., March 23.—The preliminary examination of Secretary of State Caleb Powers, charged with abetting the assassination of William Goebel, began to-day before Judge Moore. The court-house was guarded inside and out by militia and scores of deputy sheriffs, armed with Winchester rifles, to prevent possible interference from "mountaineers," who were reported on their way to Frankfort, but their presence was unnecessary, as the mountaineers failed to appear, and no disorder occurred.

The Commonwealth's witnesses were called, numbering 40. Golden was not in the list.

The witnesses to-day included Warden E. P. Lillard, Detective Armstrong, Sheriff Bosworth, of Fayette county, who arrested Secretary Powers, and Captain John Davis and Silas Jones, of Whitley county, who is now under bonds charged with complicity in the murder.

The testimony tended to show that the shots came from that section of the Executive building which Secretary Powers' office is located, although no one swore that the shots were from the secretary's office.

GOLDEN IN RESERVE.

F. Wharton Golden, who is said to have made a confession, will be put on the witness stand later. Prosecuting Attorney Polsgrove said to-night that sufficient evidence had already been heard to warrant holding Powers, but that the case would be much stronger before he was through. Former Governor Brown, for the defense, says the evidence so far is decidedly weak.

It is probable that all of the witnesses for the prosecution will be heard by to-morrow afternoon.

During the afternoon a soldier in the rear court yard dropped his revolver on the stone flagging and it exploded. In an instant every man in the crowded court room was on his feet, fully a third of them with their hands in their pockets.

TESTIMONY.

Eph Lillard, warden of the Frankfort penitentiary, testified that he walked just ahead of Senator Goebel, and when the first shot was fired he saw that the second window in the office of the Secretary of State was slightly raised. The other shots, he said, did not come from the same place. The first shot was evidently from a rifle, while the others seemed to be from pistols.

Policeman Wingate Thompson testified that as the crowd was carrying Goebel out of the yard he saw armed men at the entrance to the executive building and recognized John Davis and Berry Howard among them.

Detective Armstrong, of Louisville, said that Secretary Powers refused any information whatever at the time of the shooting as to who was in the building.

Captain John F. Hawn, of Barbour-

ville, testified that Powers had asked him to turn over his ammunition and company to Lieut. Gibson previous to the shooting.

Governor Brown made the point that a man cannot be convicted as an aider of a crime unless some principal is convicted of the crime. As the actual murderer of Goebel has not yet been named, the point possibly involved the liberty of Secretary Powers. Judge Moore ruled against the defense.

Silas Jones, of Whitley county, testified he thought the shots were fired from the corner of the building in which Secretary Powers' office is located. He immediately walked into the ante-room, where he saw Captain Davis and Governor Taylor among others.

There was considerable excitement. The Governor came to the door and wanted to know who was shot.

"Did you see anyone try to open Caleb Powers' door?" asked Attorney Polsgrove.

"Yes, I saw a man with sandy whiskers trying to open the door. He struck it with a hatchet," replied Mr. Jones.

Jones said there was much noise, but he could not say that he heard any from Secretary Powers' office.

On cross-examination Jones said he saw Powers leave his office during the morning for Louisville. This was previous to the shooting. The witness said the shots sounded as if fired from the same gun, but he could not say positively whether they were fired from the upper or the lower story of the building.

Savannah Cotton Receipts.

(By Telegraph to Virginian-Pilot.)

Savannah, Ga., March 23.—For the fifth time Savannah's cotton receipts will pass the million-bale mark to-morrow. The net total at the close of business to-day was 998,641 bales since September 1. Last year the million mark was reached March 17, and year before last February 10. Statisticians say that the latter date, at which the million was reached this year, is indicative of the shortness of the crop. It is not believed that over 100,000 bales more will reach this port of this year's crop.

OTHER TELEGRAPH PAGE 6

CLASSIFICATION OF NEWS.

BY DEPARTMENTS.

Telegraph News—Pages 1, 6 and 11.
Local News—Pages 2, 3, 5 and 11.
Editorial—Page 4.
Virginia News—Page 8.
North Carolina News—Page 7.
Portsmouth News—Pages 10 and 11.
Berkley News—Page 11.
Markets—Page 12.
Shipping—Page 9.
Real Estate—Page 12.

Continued on Page 6.

Continued on Page 6.